United Nations A/58/616

General Assembly

Distr.: General
3 December 2003

Original: English

Fifty-eighth session
Agenda items 28 and 40 (f)

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

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Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present report describes the work of the Transitional Administration to implement the Bonn Agreement. In this regard, the report focuses on the activities of the United Nations and describes key political and humanitarian developments in Afghanistan from July 2002 to November 2003.

The report highlights the deteriorating security situation as a major concern throughout the country. Unchecked criminality, outbreaks of factional fighting and activities surrounding the illegal narcotics trade have all had a negative impact on the Bonn process. During the reporting period, attacks on international and national staff

* The submission of the report was delayed in order to reflect the conduct of the Constitutional Loya Jirga, a major milestone in the Bonn process, scheduled for October 2003. As the Constitutional Loya Jirga was delayed until December 2003, it will be reflected in the next annual report.

03-63908 (E) 051203

of the assistance community have intensified. The main security threats continue to be terrorist attacks by suspected Al-Qaida, Taliban and supporters of Hekmatyar against Government forces, the United Nations and the humanitarian community. The attacks have occurred mostly in areas along the porous border in the south and south-east.

Afghanistan's economy, according to the report, has experienced important growth. Other important achievements include the rehabilitation of the national primary education system and one of the largest United Nations-assisted refugee repatriation efforts in history. It remains essential to create a secure environment in the south of Afghanistan so that reconstruction activities can take place. Equally crucial are the central Government's efforts to extend its authority, enhance its administrative capacity and deliver socio-economic benefits on a nationwide scale.

The report concludes that the international community must decide whether to increase its level of involvement in Afghanistan or risk failure. The mandate set by Bonn can be accomplished only if the present deterioration in security is halted and reversed, and the programmes and staff of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and others assisting the Afghans are provided adequate protection.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of General Assembly resolution 57/113 A and paragraph 23 of resolution 57/113 B of 6 December 2002, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its fifty-eighth session, a report on progress made in the implementation of those resolutions. The report serves as a summary of key political and humanitarian developments in Afghanistan, as well as the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) from 1 July 2002 to November 2003. The issues covered in this report are dealt with in more detail in the periodic reports to the General Assembly and Security Council submitted during the course of 2002 and 2003 (A/56/1000-S/2002/737, A/57/487-S/2002/1173, A/57/762-S/2003/333 and A/57/850-S/2003/754 and Corr.1).

II. Implementation of the Bonn Agreement

A. Increased Government capacity and extension of authority

2. Over the past year, the Afghan Transitional Administration has implemented a number of measures to strengthen its administrative structures and extend its authority. The inter-ministerial budget-making exercise conducted early in 2003 was especially important in the development of national policy-making systems (see para. 49 below).

3. The central Government has promulgated a series of reforms, including the appointment of new provincial customs supervisors, to improve revenue collection from the provinces. In the first quarter of the current fiscal year, which began on 21 March 2003, Government revenue collection surpassed that of the entire previous fiscal year. The Government anticipates raising at least $200 million this fiscal year. The introduction of the new Afghan currency, completed in January 2003, was another crucial reform. The general stability of the currency following its introduction underlines the effectiveness of this reform.

4. Progress has also been made in civil administration reform. On 20 May 2003, the National Security Council summoned 10 of the country's most powerful provincial governors and two regional commanders to Kabul and demanded their compliance with a 13-point decision (see A/57/850-S/2003/754, para. 3). The Government took a significant step towards enforcing the decision on 13 August, when it replaced the governors of two provinces, Kandahar and Zabul, who had resisted central authority, and stripped Herat Governor Ismael Khan of his military position. President Karzai and the Ministry of Interior have also successfully replaced corrupt and incompetent officials both in Kabul and in the provinces. In certain cases, however, the new appointments have been resisted by local incumbents. This underscores the need for further efforts by the central Government to ensure that all government officials accept its legal authority to make appointments and enforce civil administration decrees.

5. The creation, on 11 June 2003, of the Independent Reforms Commission of Administrative and Civil Services should facilitate merit-based appointments and promotions of government officials (see A/57/850-S/2003/754, para. 5). The Commission has the authority to remove corrupt or unqualified government

officials. The establishment, also in June 2003, of a Salary Payment Task Force by the Ministry of Finance is expected to streamline payment mechanisms, help combat corruption, improve the retention rate of civil servants and help instil loyalty to the central Government.

6. The pilot phase of the census project mandated by the Bonn Agreement was completed in early 2003. The first phase of the full census, including updating maps and making preliminary population counts, has also been completed in Parwan, Kapisa and Logar provinces, under the lead of the Afghanistan Central Statistics Office, with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The second phase, the national population census, will begin in 2004.

B. Status of the Bonn process

Constitutional reform

7. The drafting of a new constitution, as called for by the Bonn Agreement, has been a critical task during the review period. The new constitution will provide a permanent foundation for re-establishing the rule of law in Afghanistan and will define a political order that allows for the aspirations of Afghans to be peacefully achieved.

8. The drafting process began with the inauguration in November 2002 of a Constitutional Drafting Commission. In April 2003 the Drafting Commission submitted a preliminary draft constitution to the Constitutional Review Commission, appointed by presidential decree the same month. The Review Commission comprises 35 commissioners, including seven women, and represents the full professional, religious, ethnic and regional diversity of Afghanistan. Following a month-long awareness campaign, the Commission initiated public consultations in all 32 provinces of Afghanistan and in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. An estimated 178,000 Afghans, 19 per cent of whom were women, participated in more than 556 meetings to discuss the draft. In addition, over 50,000 written surveys were submitted. The results of these consultations were then incorporated by the Review Commission into a final draft constitution that was made public on 3 November 2003. The draft is being circulated nationwide prior to its submission to the Constitutional Loya Jirga for ratification.

9. The draft constitution would establish a president with significant powers and a bicameral legislature with a minimum quota for women members assured. Respect for fundamental human rights, and specifically for those rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are codified in the draft. At the same time, the draft calls for the laws of the nation to conform with the principles of Islam. The draft outlines transitional measures, including the issuance of decrees on the holding of presidential elections within six months of ratification and legislative elections no more than one year after the presidential elections are held. Reactions to the draft have been mixed. No precise polls are available, but there are indications that a significant number of Afghans believe that the draft will promote the peace process and strengthen the rule of law. Many Afghans, on the other hand, continue to favour a constitutional monarchy. This view is especially strong among Pashtuns. The status of national languages is also contentious; Pashto and Dari are to be the national languages, but minority languages are given no official status. Contention

also exists on the role of Islam, the protection of human rights (which some see as insufficient in the draft) and devolution of power to the regions.

10. The Constitutional Loya Jirga, which is to begin on 10 December 2003, will comprise 500 delegates. Of these, 344 will be elected on a provincial basis by the 16,000 registered district representatives from the 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga (see A/56/1000-S/2002/737, para. 29). An additional 106 seats have been allocated for the election of special-category representatives, including women, refugees in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, internally displaced peoples, Kuchis (nomads) and Hindus and Sikhs. The President will appoint the remaining 50 delegates, who will have legal or constitutional expertise, and half of whom will be women.

Election process

11. The Bonn Agreement calls for elections to be held in June 2004 and for the United Nations to conduct a voter registration exercise prior to those elections. Given the long years of war and strife which all but destroyed the State, the legal and institutional structure had to be created ex nihilo. The Transitional Administration accordingly appointed a six-member Interim Afghan Electoral Commission on 26 July 2003. The Commission has begun working with UNAMA to prepare for the initiation of the voter registration project. The Joint Electoral Management Body, also established on 26 July, will oversee the voter registration process, including the issuance of regulations and guidelines, provisional registration of parties and final certification of the voter registry. The Joint Electoral Management Body is composed of the six interim electoral commissioners and five international electoral experts, including the head of the UNAMA Electoral Unit.

12. In August 2003 the United Nations and the Afghan Government presented to donors a budget of $78 million for the conduct of the voter registration project. This budget, which must be met by voluntary contributions, remains underfunded by more than 50 per cent. As of early December 2003, $47 million had been either pledged or committed. Delays in funding added to a number of other logistical, cultural, geographical and political complexities. As a result, the initiation of the voter registration project was delayed from 15 October to 1 December. Security concerns following the placement of a car bomb outside the UNAMA electoral office in Kandahar in November 2003 forced a reduction in the number of teams that were to be deployed on 1 December. Under the revised plan, registration teams will deploy in each of the eight regional centres in Afghanistan, though initially voter registration will take place mostly at sites where provincial elections for the Constitutional Loya Jirga are being conducted under tight security.

13. Depending on financial and security conditions, additional registration teams will be deployed in three separate phases. The first phase will cover the regional centres with about 70 teams. The second phase will add a further 79 teams and will spread to provincial capitals. The third phase will add approximately 150 more teams, some of which will be mobile and will be deployed to remote rural areas.

14. A complementary $9 million registration security project has also been designed and presented to donors. The project will support the training and deployment of Afghan police alongside registration teams. This project, which is to be financed through the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, is fully funded.

Overall security situation

15. Security remains a major concern throughout much of the country. Unchecked criminality, outbreaks of factional fighting and activities surrounding the illegal narcotics trade have all had a negative impact on security. The primary source of instability remains terrorist activities by suspected Taliban, Al-Qaida, and supporters of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. These groups have targeted members of the Transitional Administration and the international community. During the past year, attacks on international and national staff of the assistance community have intensified. In March 2003 an international staff member of the International Committee of the Red Cross was murdered in Uruzgan province, while in the same month an Italian visitor was killed in Zabul province. United Nations and non-governmental organization vehicles and offices have also been targeted by sniper fire and attacks with explosives, resulting, in some cases, in loss of life. Earlier in the year, demining activities were halted following a deadly series of ambushes against national deminers. On 7 June 2003 a suicide car bomber detonated his vehicle alongside an International Security Assistance Force bus in Kabul, killing four soldiers and injuring 29 others in the deadliest attack against the Force since its deployment. Tragically, the month of November 2003 witnessed a series of attacks on United Nations staff and facilities, culminating in the murder of an international staff member of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Ghazni on 16 November.

16. Throughout the south and south-east, particularly the border areas, terrorist attacks against government forces, non-governmental organizations and Afghans perceived to work for or support the Government have increased. Coalition forces and Afghan National Army forces have conducted operations to seek out armed groups and to prevent cross-border infiltration. Nonetheless, in order to guarantee the safety of its staff, the United Nations imposed severe travel restrictions in the southern region (see A/57/850-S/2003/754, para. 24). Following the events of mid-November 2003, the United Nations suspended road missions and staff movements in the affected regions and reduced international staff levels. These precautions, while necessary, clearly hinder the United Nations ability to deliver programmes and support the peace process.

17. Another source of insecurity continues to be rivalry between armed factions. Skirmishes between rival factions in the north led to the establishment in early 2003 of a Joint Security Commission, in which UNAMA participates. Among its successes, the Commission was able to broker ceasefires following the outbreak of fighting in Maymana, Faryab province, in April 2003 and in Mazar-i-Sharif, Balkh province, in May and October 2003. Nonetheless, tensions remain high and durable solutions are not yet apparent.

Security sector reform

18. In the last eight months the Government has begun the process of reforming national security institutions. This process requires coordinating five interrelated efforts: (a) disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed factions; (b) building a new national army; (c) training a new national police force and border guard; (d) rehabilitating the justice sector; and (e) counter-narcotics.

19. Momentum for reform was set by the 1 December 2002 presidential decree establishing the Afghan National Army and calling for the disarmament,

demobilization and reintegration of all factional forces and the reform of the Ministry of Defence. Unfortunately, the pace of reform has been slower than desired. Indeed, each step of the process has met with opposition from political leaders at the highest levels.

20. Nonetheless, important progress was made with the implementation in September 2003 of a Ministry of Defence reform plan. The plan called for 22 "first tier" positions within the Ministry to be restaffed so that the leadership would be more representative of Afghanistan's diversity. This meant, in particular, decreasing the influence of the Defence Minister's Panshiri faction. The reform, when accomplished, was less sweeping than had been hoped. As a result, many Afghans continue to believe that real power remains in the hands of a single faction. This sentiment is particularly strong among the Pashtun population in the south. In order to gain the confidence of many Afghans, the new Ministry of Defence must demonstrably pursue national, rather than factional, policies. In particular, the newly appointed high-level staff must be given, and demonstrate, effective authority in their areas of responsibility. Similar reforms are needed in the Ministry of Interior and Intelligence agencies, so that they are truly national institutions.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

21. As stated above, reform of the Defence Ministry underpins a number of other reform efforts. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed factions is a crucial programme that could not be implemented as long as the Ministry of Defence was overtly controlled by a single faction. Without disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, insecurity will persist and popular participation in the constitutional process and in the national election will be hindered. A successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, on the other hand, can help create the conditions for the emergence of an impartial judicial system and the establishment of a functional national army and police.

22. In October 2003, the Ministry of Defence reform was deemed to be sufficient to allow the initiation of two disarmament, demobilization and reintegration pilot projects. In the first pilot project, which began in Kunduz on 24 October, 647 soldiers were demobilized and absorbed into various reintegration schemes. The second pilot project began in Gardez on 9 November, and 586 soldiers were demobilized. The full disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme is likely to begin in early 2004. Overall, the programme aims to disarm 40,000 soldiers and reintegrate 35,000 over the first year (the remaining 5,000 will be trained and incorporated into the new national army). Some 100,000 soldiers will be demobilized over the multi-year programme.

23. The preparation of the technical and operational dimensions of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme has been strongly supported by the Government of Japan, which is the lead nation for this effort. On 22 February Japan hosted a donor conference in Tokyo to mobilize international support, at which pledges totalling $50.7 million were made, and Japan itself contributed $35 million to the programme.

Afghan National Army

24. Under the lead of the United States of America, 11 Afghan National Army battalions have been established, bringing the current force strength to about 6,500

soldiers out of an eventual 70,000. Four battalions will be ready to provide security during the Constitutional Loya Jirga in December 2003. In July 2003 two Afghan National Army battalions joined the United States-led coalition forces in Zurmat, Paktia province, to combat suspected Taliban and other insurgents. One battalion has also been deployed to Mazar-i-Sharif to help stabilize the area. Afghan National Army units temporarily deployed on training missions around the country, including in Gardez and Bamian, have been well received by Afghans, who have appreciated their discipline and professionalism.

Police and corrections reform

25. Among Afghan security institutions, the Ministry of Interior has implemented the most far-reaching reforms. In response to the 6 April 2003 presidential decree, the Ministry has begun reorganizing its internal structure and devised a five-year plan for establishing a professional 50,000-member national police service and 12,000-member border guard (authority for the border guard was transferred from the Ministry of Defence to the Ministry of Interior in January 2003). The training of the police officer corps, as well as specialized units, is being conducted by the German Police Support Project. Since May 2003 the United States of America has run a complementary programme to train police instructors and upgrade the skills of officers currently serving in the Kabul police force. The Ministry of Interior also established an autonomous human rights unit in April 2003. This unit has followed up on over 70 cases of alleged human rights violations by law enforcement officials since the end of May.

26. The transfer of responsibility for national corrections services from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Justice is ongoing. The Judicial Reform Commission is carrying out a survey to determine which corrections facilities should be upgraded to meet minimum international standards. On 17 May a two-year agreement was signed by the Ministry of Justice and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on the reform of the penitentiary system in Afghanistan.

27. Funding for police sector reform, including the payment of police salaries, is being carried out through the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, administered by the United Nations Development Programme.

Judicial reform

28. In the context of Afghanistan's fragile transition to peace, reform of the justice sector is inseparable from security, and thus from parallel reforms of the military, the police and the correctional system. The goal of judicial reform in particular is to create impartial, accountable, sustainable and permanent institutions of justice.

29. The Transitional Administration established the Judicial Reform Commission, which began work in November 2002 (see A/57/762-S/2003/333, para. 37, and A/57/487-S/2002/1173, para. 25). Italy, the lead donor country for the justice sector, organized a conference in Rome on 19 and 20 December at which donors pledged $30 million for financial and technical support, of which $20 million came from Italy itself.

30. The Judicial Reform Commission completed a preliminary survey of justice sector needs, including physical infrastructure, staffing, procedures, informal justice and corrections, in 10 provinces in June 2003. A number of other initiatives have

begun, including training for judges and prosecutors, infrastructure rehabilitation, indexing and revising of laws, and legal education and awareness.

Drug control

31. The Transitional Government has demonstrated its commitment to address illegal drug production and has expressed its readiness to join multilateral counter-narcotics efforts. Nonetheless, according to the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2003* of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Afghanistan remains the largest opium-producing country in the world. Opium growers have, furthermore, adapted to eradication efforts. Poppy cultivation appears to have spread to several new provinces in the 2003 planting season, while decreasing in the traditional growing areas of Helmand, Kandahar, Nangarhar and Uruzgan.

32. With support from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the lead nation for drug control, the Government undertook several steps to combat illegal narcotics during the reporting period. A Counter-Narcotics Directorate was created within the National Security Council of Afghanistan in October 2002 to provide technical support and advice to relevant ministries and to ensure the timely implementation of national drug control objectives. In May 2003 Afghanistan adopted a 10-year national drug control strategy aimed at eliminating the production and consumption of illicit narcotics and trafficking into, within and from the country. Additionally, a Counter-Narcotics Police Department was created within the Ministry of Interior. An eradication campaign had some tangible results but had to be discontinued in some areas as a result of significant opposition from farmers.

33. Rural underdevelopment, the absence of rule of law, limitations on financial resources for law enforcement and the lack of alternative livelihoods continue to limit the capacity of the Government to combat illegal narcotics. In this regard, regional solutions to the threat of drugs are all the more important. In May 2003 the International Conference on Drug Routes from Central Asia to Europe brought together countries affected by drugs from Afghanistan in order to promote international cooperation and to strengthen national interdiction and the demand-reduction policies of those affected.

Provincial reconstruction teams

34. Beginning in December 2002, the United States-led coalition forces began deploying provincial reconstruction teams outside of Kabul (in Bamian, Gardez and Kunduz). The teams have assisted with reconstruction and contributed to the overall security environment by building confidence, assisting in the extension of government authority and providing a platform for the training and deployment of new national security institutions. UNAMA has worked closely with the teams, helping them to support the security needs of Afghanistan by proposing functions such as providing police training and rehabilitating government and transportation infrastructure.

35. A number of countries have shown an interest in setting up additional teams, including New Zealand, which assumed command of the Bamian team. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland earlier deployed a team to Mazar-i-Sharif, where it has taken an active role in supporting the mediation and disarmament work of the Joint Security Commission (see para. 17 above). Germany

is establishing a team in Kunduz, which is under the authority of the International Security Assistance Force, as opposed to the other teams functioning under Coalition supervision. The United States has established teams in Herat and Kandahar. In total, 13 teams are planned to start by early 2004. Priority is being given to creating a chain of provincial reconstruction teams across the unstable south of Afghanistan, in Kandahar, Khost, Kunar and Zabul.

International Security Assistance Force

36. Germany and the Netherlands assumed leadership of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from Turkey in February 2003. Following their completion of six months of command on 11 August 2003, control of ISAF was transferred to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO leadership is meant to obviate the need to find a new lead country every six months and provide more integrated command and logistics support. The mandate of ISAF remains unchanged under NATO command, and non-NATO countries continue to contribute troops. The presence of ISAF has greatly contributed to the security environment in Kabul and continues to be well received by the public.

37. On 13 October 2003 the Security Council adopted resolution 1510 (2003), authorizing the expansion of ISAF beyond Kabul, which the Afghan Government and the United Nations had been urging since early 2002. The establishment under ISAF command of a German provincial reconstruction team in Kunduz (see para. 35 above) is the first deployment of ISAF beyond Kabul. It remains important for other countries to provide the manpower and resources necessary to continue to extend ISAF to the other major cities of Afghanistan where its presence is greatly needed.

International relations

38. Looking to the region in general, it remains important for the seven signatories of the December 2002 Kabul Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations and the 22 September 2003 Declaration on Encouraging Closer Trade, Transit and Investment Cooperation to respect and build upon their commitments to support regional political stability and mutual economic well-being. Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have experienced some tensions, expressed publicly, during the reporting period. A key issue is the infiltration from across the Pakistan border of elements hostile to the Afghan Government. In a meeting with President Karzai on 22 April 2003, President Musharraf expressed his willingness to cooperate with Afghanistan on security. However, reports in late June and early July of incursions into Afghan territory by Pakistan military forces undermined these efforts for cooperation. The reports led, inexcusably, to the ransacking of the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul by a mob on 8 July 2003, marking a low point in what had otherwise been a period of improved bilateral relations in trade, assistance and refugee returns. The establishment in April 2003 of a tripartite commission by Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United States of America has helped to address the underlying causes of tension between the two neighbours.

C. Human rights

Overall human rights situation

39. In the absence of rule of law in Afghanistan, violations of human rights are, unfortunately, routine. During the reporting period, UNAMA has received and followed up on numerous complaints of political intimidation. Many of these include claims by the media, civil society and political parties that their freedom of expression has been curtailed. These violations have been observed mainly in Kabul, Herat and, to a lesser extent, Mazar-i-Sharif. The apparent increase in abuse in recent months, as the constitutional reform process and preparations for the national election get under way, are particularly worrisome. The legitimacy of these processes depends on unhindered participation by all Afghans.

40. The persecution and forced displacement of minority groups in the north and west, particularly of Pashtuns, led to the establishment in October 2002 of the Return Commission for the North. A recent mission to Faryab, Samangan, Balkh, Jowzjan and Sar-i-Pul provinces by the Return Commission Working Group determined that conditions amenable to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons generally exist in the region, though in several districts adequate security conditions are still lacking. Understandably, many internally displaced persons in the south indicated their unwillingness to return to their areas of origin in the north unless security can be guaranteed, impunity for commanders ended and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration implemented.

41. A preliminary assessment of the Dasht-i-Leily mass grave was conducted by forensic experts from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in February 2003 (see A/57/762-S/2003/333, paras. 43 and 44, and A/57/487-S/2002/1173, para. 21). No further work has been conducted, as security for the site and for potential witnesses cannot yet be guaranteed. However, in this context, it is important both symbolically and as a deterrent against egregious violations of human rights that the Government took the important step of ratifying the Statute of the International Criminal Court on 10 February 2003.

Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission

42. Throughout the past year, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, with support from UNAMA and OHCHR has refined its capacity to process petitions and complaints and to conduct human rights investigations. The ability of the Commission to serve as an effective advocate for victims of abuse has been aided by its relationship with the United Nations. The Commission has also begun to operate at the national level following the opening of seven satellite offices across the country between March and May 2003. The arrival of the Chief Technical Adviser to the Commission has facilitated its strategic planning and prioritization of activities. The Commission has consulted with the Judicial Reform Commission and the Constitutional Commission to ensure that the latter adequately reflects human rights concerns, and has also organized a number of human rights education and training seminars for an array of constituents, including Government ministries, journalists, mullahs and religious scholars and the national police. Additionally, the Human Rights Advisory Group, established in the context of the consultative process for the national development budget and chaired by the Commission, has provided a monthly forum for representatives of the Government, the donor

community, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations to coordinate broader human rights issues.

D. Gender

43. Women have been actively involved in the preparations for the Constitutional Loya Jirga and national voter registration. The Ministry of Women's Affairs, UNAMA, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and civil organizations have convened a number of meetings over the past several months to examine issues such as the role of women in constitutional (see para. 8 above) and legal reform and in the election. The voter registration process, for example, includes a number of specific measures to promote the enfranchisement of women.

44. On 8 March 2003 International Women's Day was celebrated in coordination with the Ministry of Women's Affairs. A resolution was passed recognizing the important role of women in reconstructing the country. Afghanistan's commitment to women's human rights was strengthened by its ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 4 April 2003.

45. Nonetheless, women in Afghanistan continue to face significant obstacles. Intimidation, restrictions on movement, forced marriage, honour killings and "protective" incarceration are realities, particularly in rural areas, where conservative social attitudes prevail. Women are also threatened in these areas by local commanders who violate women's rights and commit sexual abuse with impunity. Refugee women and widows also face specific risks associated with lack of security, as well as physical and psychological hardship.

III. Relief, recovery and reconstruction

46. During the review period, Afghanistan has made definite progress towards post-war recovery. Gross domestic product grew by 30 per cent in 2002-2003, and is expected to grow by a further 20 per cent in 2004. Other achievements include the rehabilitation of the national primary education system and the successful management of one of the largest United Nations-assisted refugee repatriation efforts in history (see paras. 64-67 below). Serious challenges remain, however. The most important of these is to create a secure environment in the south of Afghanistan so that reconstruction activities can take place. Equally crucial are the central Government's efforts to extend its authority, enhance its administrative capacity and deliver socio-economic benefits on a nationwide scale.

47. The blueprint for post-war recovery is contained in Afghanistan's national development budget. The budget for the current year is $1.8 billion. As of mid-September, total donor commitments to the development budget are $1.2 billion. Of this, $529 million has been disbursed, representing 29 per cent of budget requirements and 40 per cent of funds committed by donors. The funding shortfall means that many programmes remain under-delivered. The potential for donor fatigue is particularly worrying given that next year's development budget will increase to $2.5 billion as the implementation of larger projects accelerates.

48. United Nations assistance to Afghanistan is channelled through the Transitional Assistance Programme for Afghanistan. Launched in December 2002, it

established priorities and strategies for coordinated international assistance in support of relief, recovery and reconstruction. The Programme reflects an agreement between the Transitional Administration and the United Nations to ensure that United Nations humanitarian programming supports the national priorities identified by the Government in the national development budget and strengthens the Government's implementation capacity. For the period covering January 2003 to March 2004, the Programme originally sought $815 million. This was subsequently reduced to $715 million, as the Programme was consolidated with the national development budget. As of October 2003, some $360 million in contributions had been received, meaning that just over 50 per cent of the revised requirements for the Programme have been met. An additional $354 million is still needed.

49. In order to strengthen programme collaboration between the United Nations and Government partners, it was jointly agreed to conduct periodic joint programme reviews. At the first such review, held in late September 2002, agencies were requested to submit their individual agency plans for 2003 to an inter-ministerial committee. The objective of this midterm review was to assess the implementation of the 1382 (March 2002-March 2003) development budget identify critical funding gaps and evaluate lessons learned. The review demonstrated that the national development budget is becoming the primary instrument of government policy-making and that the consultative group process is becoming the main mechanism for coordinating government, donors and United Nations agencies.

50. In June 2003 the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development launched the National Area-Based Development Programme (see A/57/850-S/2003/333, para. 8). Under the leadership of provincial governors, four-day local planning workshops identified district-level development priorities in 21 provinces, where at least one priority project will be funded during 2003. The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, also initiated the National Solidarity Programme, which aims to develop community-level development capacities. Nineteen national and international non-governmental organizations have been granted one-year contracts as facilitating partners in 29 provinces, with further contracts covering the remaining three provinces expected shortly. Over the next year, some 6,900 villages in 96 districts will participate in the Programme (see A/57/850-S/2003/333, para. 9).

A. Winter response

51. Some 2.2 million highly vulnerable Afghans, mainly in the north, west and central highlands, received winter assistance during the review period. In rural areas, special attention was given to remote communities. In urban areas, priority was given to returnees and internally displaced persons lacking adequate shelter or support mechanisms, as well as to extremely vulnerable families. The provision of assistance was facilitated by a cabinet-level winter-preparedness commission led by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. United Nations staff were also seconded to provincial departments to facilitate the provision of assistance. Non-food needs were met and 95 per cent of required food supplies were pre-positioned prior to February 2003. Emergency repairs to the Salang Tunnel by the Ministry and non-governmental organization partners and to other routes by the United Nations Joint Logistics Cell and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) maintained road access throughout the winter months.

B. Agriculture

52. The 2002 cereal harvest was 83 per cent above that of the previous year and only slightly below the pre-drought levels of 1998. In 2003 cereal production was up by another 50 per cent due to good rainfall and the exploitation of previously unused land plots. In 2003, wheat production in rain-fed areas increased 77 per cent over that of 2002. The abundant rainfall has also induced farmers to cultivate marginal land, which has normally been used as pastureland in some areas. However, equivalent high levels of production from rain-fed land may not be sustainable in the future.

C. Food aid and food security

53. As of June 2003, some 10 million people had been provided with 535,000 metric tons of food commodities, including supplementary feeding, school feeding and civil service rations. An estimated 6 million Afghans still require food assistance for the rest of 2003. Substantial food deficits remain among certain remote, displaced and recently returned populations, but the numbers of those affected are substantially lower than in 2002, reflecting increased rainfall and the start of economic recovery. However, food insecurity has been exacerbated in some areas of the country by environmental degradation and, in the south and south-west, continued drought.

54. A combination of ongoing food aid schemes is ensuring that food assistance needs are met. As Afghanistan has a predominantly agrarian economy, the majority of food aid projects are focused on the restoration of agricultural opportunities, the recovery of agricultural land, seed stocks, irrigation systems, the rehabilitation of pasturelands and the recuperation of livestock, as well as environmental protection. Special initiatives are addressing the particular needs of vulnerable groups, including nomadic Kuchi populations, whose traditional way of life has been severely damaged by years of drought and conflict.

D. Health and nutrition

55. During the reporting period, the Ministry of Health has focused on providing all rural communities with access to primary care by the end of 2003 through the Basic Package of Health Services programme, which is supported by the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development, the European Union and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In response to maternal mortality in Afghanistan, which is the highest in the world, the Ministry of Health, with support from UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNFPA, is establishing an emergency obstetric care centre in each province. As the availability of safe blood is a key function of emergency obstetric care services, further reductions in maternal mortality are expected to result from the Central Blood Bank, which opened on 15 June.

56. On 20 May 2003 Afghanistan observed a Day of National Unity for Children to highlight its achievements in children's health and education over the last 18 months. On the same day it launched the birth registration campaign for children under one year of age and national immunization days. Through the birth

registration project, basic information is being collected that helps ensure that children are immunized and enrolled in school at the right age, as well determining the need for basic services and facilitating efforts to protect them from illegal trafficking and adoption.

57. The national immunization days campaigns during the reporting period were highly successful. In 2002 11 million children were immunized, and in 2003 5 million. Following the final round of immunizations against poliomyelitis in December 2002, no confirmed cases of polio have yet been reported in 2003. In May 2003 measles coverage was 94 per cent nationally, effectively stopping the transmission of measles, which was responsible for up to 15 to 20 per cent of mortality in children under five years of age. The 2003 tetanus campaign for women of childbearing age had coverage of 95 per cent.

E. Water and sanitation

58. The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development in collaboration with UNICEF, UNHCR and several non-governmental organizations has been providing safe drinking water and sanitation facilities to schools, vulnerable villages affected by drought, communities experiencing high numbers of refugee returns and camps for internally displaced persons. In addition, UNICEF, WHO and the World Food Programme (WFP) are working with the Ministry of Health to reduce the steep rise in the incidence of diarrhoeal diseases, especially in major cities, through public awareness campaigns and the chlorination of drinking water. This year, all camps for internally displaced persons have been provided with these facilities, but only a third of the 3,500 schools and less than 5 per cent of the vulnerable villages targeted have received these services. The main constraints of the sector are the low funding response from donors, the shortage of sufficient implementing partners and appropriate drilling equipment, and insufficient capacities to plan and manage the sector.

F. Education

59. For the new school year, which began on 21 March 2003, educational supplies were distributed to 4 million schoolchildren, 50,000 primary school teachers and over 5,000 school principals nationwide. Following the back-to-school programme, 829,000 more Afghan children were enrolled in school in 2003 than in 2002; some 304,500 of those are girls. To encourage enrolment, attendance and school performance, WFP has been providing food assistance to nearly 400,000 schoolchildren in 1,416 schools throughout the country. As an added incentive to attend school, girls have also received a take-home oil ration.

60. A technical assessment led by the Ministry of Education, in partnership with UNICEF and UNOPS, identified 292 schools countrywide, serving over 127,000 children, for rehabilitation or construction. With support from the Ogata Initiative, 196 are located in the Mazar-i-Sharif, Jalalabad and Kandahar regions, areas of high numbers of refugee returns.

61. In order to reduce the high rate of illiteracy among women — an estimated 79 per cent — a new partnership between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and UNICEF was launched on 8 March 2003, International

Women's Day, to produce the country's first literacy textbook for women. To complement the textbook, a set of teaching materials is also being produced for those who will deliver literacy courses.

G. Culture and media

62. The Ministry of Information and Culture, with support from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has begun work on restoring a number of cultural sites and monuments, including the Kabul Museum. The rehabilitation of the national archives, public libraries and the Kabul theatre were completed during the reporting period. The Ministry and UNESCO are also attempting to prevent illicit excavations of historical sites and trafficking of cultural objects.

63. In the area of media development, UNAMA has been involved in several projects to increase the availability of news and information on the Bonn process. Since December 2002 Radio and Television Afghanistan (RTA) has been producing a weekly radio programme in Dari and Pashto, with input from the United Nations. In cooperation with UNAMA, RTA has also trained four television producers and provided state-of-the-art film-editing equipment, which has enabled work to start on a series of television documentaries.

H. Voluntary repatriation and reintegration

64. According to UNHCR, over 2.5 million individuals have received repatriation assistance since the operation began in March 2002. The returnees have generally been able to return to their communities of origin and have faced no discrimination on the basis of their returnee status. However, like settled members of communities, the sustainability of their livelihoods and protection from human rights abuses remain critical issues that are exacerbated by the absence of security.

65. Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and UNHCR signed a joint agreement in June 2003 on the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees. It is a continuation of the repatriation agreement signed in Geneva last year and provides for the gradual return of some 1 million Afghans from the Islamic Republic of Iran over the next two years. The agreement, which will remain in force until 2005, gives Afghanistan and the principal countries of asylum a framework for the voluntary return of refugees during that time frame.

66. Since the beginning of 2002, UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration have provided 341,000 internally displaced persons with assistance in returning to their places of origin. Since January 2003 over 41,000 internally displaced persons have left camps in the south and west of the country. Lingering effects of drought and ongoing security threats, however, have prevented the 300,000 internally displaced persons still living in camps and settlements from returning. The majority of these individuals are in Helmand and Kandahar.

67. UNHCR has suspended its repatriation programme from Pakistan in the wake of the killing of a UNHCR staff member, Bettina Goislard, in Ghazni in November 2003. Voluntary repatriation centres in Pakistan were closed, as well as the office in

Ghazni. UNHCR also temporarily closed its offices in Kandahar, Gardez and Jalalabad and has suspended road missions in the south, south-east and east.

I. Mine action

68. Landmines and unexploded ordnance remain a significant threat to the recovery of Afghanistan. Close to 800 square kilometres of land throughout the country — of which over 50 per cent is of the highest priority for clearance — is affected, creating a serious impediment to critical humanitarian and development activities and inflicting large numbers of casualties on the local population. In some areas, contamination has been exacerbated by recent military activities and by heavy rains and landslides, which have shifted mines into previously cleared areas and altered minefield markers.

69. In response to this problem, the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan, made up of 15 implementing non-governmental organizations with over 7,200 personnel and coordinated by the United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan, has continued to meet the growing needs of humanitarian and development partners and to increase its cooperation with the Government and other entities. Significant efforts were made in 2003 to combat the threat, including the clearance of over 105 square kilometres of land and the provision of messages to 2.5 million Afghans on reducing mine risk. Surveying has reduced suspected threat areas by over 26 square kilometres, while humanitarian and development priorities, such as major road projects and infrastructure, have been better integrated into the planning, coordination and implementation of operations. In the coming months, the Mine Action Programme will also assist in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process through the integration of significant numbers of former combatants as part of a "mine action for peace" initiative. These efforts are part of ongoing progress to making Afghanistan mine-safe within 10 years as per a multi-year strategy developed by the Government, the United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan and other partners. The continuation of these tasks, which remain a prerequisite for many of the other development and recovery efforts, will, however, remain reliant upon significant donor support for mine action.

J. Road reconstruction

70. In July 2003 the United States of America and Japan began repairing six sectors of the Kabul-Kandahar highway, totalling 439 kilometres in length. Elsewhere, Pakistan and the European Union are undertaking reconstruction of the Torkham-Kabul road; the Asian Development Bank is proceeding on the Spin Boldak-Kandahar sector; the Islamic Republic of Iran should complete work on the Islam Qala-Herat road early next year; and Saudi Arabia is repairing a portion of the Kandahar-Herat road. As part of a $108 million World Bank emergency transport rehabilitation programme, reconstruction of the Salang Tunnel, the main road link between the north and the south of the country, began in July 2003 under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Works.

IV. Mission

71. On 1 November 2002 the Department of Peacekeeping Operations assumed the lead responsibility for UNAMA from the Department of Political Affairs.

72. Greater integration of United Nations efforts in Afghanistan is being facilitated through the establishment of the United Nations Operations Centre, a combined logistics and administrative facility on the outskirts of Kabul. UNAMA relocated its administrative offices to the complex on 31 March 2003 and has since continued to transfer components of the mission there. The Afghan New Beginnings Programme formally inaugurated its headquarters at the complex on 12 July 2003, and UNICEF is expected to move into the complex on 15 August 2003. Other United Nations agencies are considering or have committed to relocating in whole or in part. Co-location should improve staff security and allow financial savings through the provision of joint facilities. To assist in the transfer of electoral staff and supplies to Kabul, UNAMA also opened an office in Dubai effective 12 June 2003.

73. The Mission has continued to convert international posts to national ones in order to minimize the size of the international staff presence and develop national staff capacity. Training courses in English, report writing, computer use and other skills have also been offered to national staff.

74. Deputy Special Representative Fisher left the Mission at the end of July 2003. His departure provided an opportunity to reassess the structure of UNAMA in order to further integrate its relief, recovery and reconstruction, political and other functions and to increase its coordination with United Nations agencies and its ability to provide leadership and guidance at the policy and strategic levels in all aspects of its mandate, while acting as an instrument for the national Government to develop its full potential and leadership.

75. In response to the demand for explicit involvement by UNAMA in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, the Security Council adopted resolution 1471 (2003), authorizing the enlargement of the Military Advisory Unit from 8 to 12 officers. This will make it possible to deploy one military liaison officer to each of the eight field offices on a more permanent basis.

76. Security Council resolution 1471 (2003) also authorized the expansion of the Civilian Police Advisory Unit to eight officers. The enlarged complement of officers has improved the ability of UNAMA to provide advice to the Government, in coordination with the German and United States training projects.

V. Observations

77. It has been more than 12 months since the establishment of the Transitional Administration. In this time, the initial euphoria of peace has been replaced by the complex legacies of two and a half decades of armed conflict. As a result, critical political processes have had to be or are at risk of being delayed. Strong political will on the part of the Government of Afghanistan and Member States will be required, in particular to redress insecurity and promote the reform of key government institutions.

78. As the Transitional Administration struggles to consolidate its authority and to extend the mantle of security to the provinces, the same factional politics that

destabilize much of the country undermine its effectiveness as a national Government. There has been an increasing sense among key constituencies that certain institutions of government are neither accountable for their actions nor reflective of national aspirations. In this climate, ensuring a secure environment for the Constitutional Loya Jirga and 2004 national elections envisioned by the Bonn Agreement takes on greater importance. If the outcomes of these processes are to lay the foundation for reconciliation and stability, then the processes themselves must be perceived as legitimate and public participation must be free of intimidation and political violence.

79. The success of the upcoming political undertakings therefore depends first and foremost on the commitment of the major factions that have established a military presence extending over various parts of the country. Every day that key Government ministries remain dominated by factional interests is another day in which Afghan confidence in the central Government is further eroded. First among the ministries that must be reformed are those responsible for the security of the nation: Defence, Interior and Intelligence. Continued reform should send an important signal to the country of the Government's commitment to the creation of truly national security forces and should build the trust necessary for a successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Additional time-specific benchmarks that should help ensure that the Government and the international community are able to conduct a credible election must be identified and met.

80. Security is needed not only to create the environment for political activities, but for reconstruction as well. The restriction of development activities in the most unstable parts of the country has not been without consequence. The denial of both security and basic social services to populations in these areas serves to further undermine public confidence in the peace process. Providing social sector reconstruction — in terms of schools, clinics, roads, and economic opportunities — attributable to the central Government will build not only political support, but also loyalty to national institutions. Such development opportunities are also likely to minimize entry into the illegal drug economy, which, if unchecked, has the potential to undermine much of the institution-building effort and the rule of law in Afghanistan. In this context, the recently proposed injection of up to $1.5 billion in aid from the United States of America would likely have a major impact on the rebuilding of Afghanistan, particularly as a portion of the money would finance projects that could be completed within a year, thereby having maximum effect before the elections in 2004.

81. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed groups and their replacement by a national army; the training of a new, professional police force; the rehabilitation of the justice system; and stemming the threat posed by illicit drugs are all essential for security, prosperity and the restoration of rule of law in Afghanistan. The international community has demonstrated its commitment to help with the establishment of the new security and legal institutions. Yet, while progress in any one of these areas is a step towards peace in Afghanistan, the full benefit of these combined projects will be felt only in the years to come.

82. Clearly, there are grave challenges to the Bonn process, and the commitment of the international community and the Afghan Government must not waver now. To ensure that the Bonn process succeeds in consolidating peace and stability, it is indispensable that international support be significantly increased and sustained.

Above all, the international community needs to strengthen its commitment to provide security. The best way to fill the security gap is for Member States to give meaning to resolution 1510 (2003) and contribute the necessary resources to enable ISAF to expand to the areas where it is most needed.

83. The United Nations remains committed to fulfilling the mandate set by Bonn, but it can do so only if the present deterioration in security is halted and reversed, and if the programmes and staff, both national and international, of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and others assisting the Afghans are provided adequate protection. The increase in attacks on United Nations staff and other international and Afghan civilians engaged in providing assistance and furthering the peace process is a matter of the utmost concern. Their work is aimed only at improving the lives of Afghans, who have already suffered far too much. Whoever the perpetrators of these acts may be, they are the enemies of the people of Afghanistan itself and the enemies of peace in Afghanistan and in the whole region. Such despicable acts must be condemned in the strongest possible terms by everyone, and the criminal elements behind them must be made to understand that they will be resolutely opposed by all Afghan authorities, as well as by all regional and international actors whose interests and duty is to protect and promote the peace process in Afghanistan.

84. Finally, taking note of the invitation made to me by the Security Council mission to Afghanistan to study the possibilities for a second international conference to ensure the necessary financial support and political momentum for peace and stability in Afghanistan (see S/2003/1074, para. 14), I have begun a process of consultations on a follow-up to the Bonn process. In broad terms, I believe that such a conference would bring together a representative spectrum of the Afghan population in partnership with the international community. These stakeholders would review what has been achieved so far and assess what must be improved. The second conference would provide an opportunity to revise priorities for Afghanistan and define an agenda beyond the life of the Bonn Agreement. The conference should therefore serve to regenerate the political and financial support necessary for a full political and economic transition, as envisaged by the Bonn Agreement.